

Ending Sexual Violence and Harassment Implementation Plan

Action 13: Undertake a study which analyses the views and experience of those to whom disclosures were made

Call for Applications

Introduction:

The [Ending Sexual Violence and Harassment in Higher Education Institutions Implementation Plan](#) was launched in October 2022 in response to analysis of the [National Surveys of Staff and Student Experiences of Sexual Violence and Harassment in Irish HEIs](#). The Implementation Plan is intended to build on and complement the broad range of initiatives ongoing across the sector towards the outcomes set out in the ESVH Framework ([Safe, Respectful, Supportive and Positive: Ending Sexual Violence and Harassment in Irish Higher Education Institutions](#)) and accompanying institutional action plans.

The purpose of this call is to support Action 13 of the Implementation Plan which is **to undertake a study which analyses the views and experience of those to whom disclosures were made.**

Actions 12 and 13 of the ESVH Implementation Plan were included in recognition of the need for qualitative research to explore the context in which members of HEIs have experienced sexual violence and harassment (SVH) and how this issue is responded to by the institution, in addition to an exploration of decision-making and experiences linked to disclosure, reporting and support seeking, with a view to making recommendations for improved policy and practice. Action 12, to undertake a study following the victim's journey from disclosure to outcome, is currently underway. It is intended that the outcomes of Action 13 will also support the achievement of the recommendation underlying Action 12 and 13 (Explore the context in which staff members have experienced sexual violence and harassment) and the related ESVH Framework outcomes 9: Policies include guidelines for addressing student complaints, including transparency for all involved and 10: Policy implementation is supported by compiling relevant information, leadership of high level HEI officer, and through the appropriate structures, an annual report on institutional initiatives and data to the Governing Authority.

Timeframe:

- Call for applications issues to HEIs – 29 September 2025
- Deadline for applications – 12:00pm, 10 November 2025
- Announcement of outcome – Q4 2025

Budget:

The total funding envelope for the study is **€100,000**. It is intended to allocate the total budget to one proposal. The HEA reserves the right to allocate more than one award and to allocate more or less than the total envelope as is deemed appropriate. Applications may include a maximum funding request of **€100,000** from the HEA. Eligible costs can be found in Appendix 2.

Scope:

It is recognised that Action 13 presents a valuable opportunity to capture and analyse the voices of those who have received disclosures and to provide them with a safe platform to share their experiences and views. The study will be qualitative in nature and should capture a diverse range of staff and student experiences of receiving disclosures of SVH. In this context, disclosures may be understood to encompass informal sharing of SVH experienced in a HEI that is disclosed to staff or students by an individual staff member, student or other member of the college community, which may or may not have resulted in a formal complaint to the HEI. This could include reports made to EDI, Welfare, HR, designated liaison people, class reps, student union officers, training facilitators etc. that were not formally reported. It should not include disclosures made to counselling services or via anonymous reporting tools.

Study objectives:

1. To analyse the views and experiences of those to whom disclosures were made.
2. To explore the challenges, supports, and opportunities that arise in the process of receiving and (where relevant to the person's role) progressing a disclosure.
3. To develop evidence-informed recommendations for higher education institutions to enhance support to survivors and those receiving disclosures and improve institutional responses to SVH.

Study outputs:

A clear and succinct research report including the following:

- An executive summary
- Introduction
- Approach and methodology

- Analysis
- Key findings
- Discussion and conclusions
- Clear and specific recommendations for higher education institutions intended to enhance support for those receiving disclosures of SVH in their institutions.

Study methodology:

It is anticipated that the study methodology will be driven by a qualitative research design. The proposal should describe data collection strategies that enable in-depth, experiential accounts of receiving a disclosure to be obtained. Alongside this, one or more strategies should be included to generate insights from students and staff from a range of backgrounds who have received disclosures of different kinds. The proposal may for instance make use of a mixed method research design that draws on more than one data collection strategy as appropriate (e.g., semi-structured in-person interviews, participatory research techniques, open-ended online survey questions).

The lead institution should ensure that research participants are empowered with opportunities to exercise choice and control over how their information and stories are used. Interviewees should be provided with the opportunity to review their interview transcripts and to make changes or withdraw if they wish to do so.

The lead institutions should ensure research participants have the option to provide feedback on the proposed recommendations emerging from the research and to be kept informed of the research outputs if they so choose. This would necessitate storing of contact details safely and securely for the duration of the project.

Study participants:

While recognising that the recruitment of research participants may be challenging, it is anticipated that a range of demographic cohorts and a diversity of experiences and behaviours (for example emerging areas such as online-based harassment) are explored as part of the study.

The research participants should include staff and students of at least 3 HEIs that have received disclosures since joining their institutions and in the past 4 years. Former staff and alumni of an institution may also be considered. While research participants may or may not have a role in managing subsequent formal complaints and investigations, where information is available, the research participants may include (but are not limited to) staff and students that have received disclosures to their institution that were investigated by the institution (whether the complaint was upheld or not). It should also capture the experiences of individuals that received disclosures that were not formally reported to the HEI or investigated or investigated.

It is anticipated that these participants would include staff or students whose substantive role is within EDI, Welfare or ESVH and who have received disclosures, but also staff and students whose substantive role may be outside these areas, e.g. lecturers, heads of school, international office staff, professional/management staff, or students.

The identity of the participants and higher education institutions will be anonymised, however efforts should be made to include the experiences of individuals from a several different institutions of varying size and location. The lead institution must ensure that anonymity and non-identification throughout the process and ensure that the research participants do not share names or any identifying details about the disclosures that they have received. Relevant ethical approval should be in place before research commences.

Other requirements:

The lead interviewer should be adequately trained and supported to adopt a survivor-centred and trauma-informed approach specific to supporting survivors of sexual violence and harassment and those receiving disclosures of SVH. The lead institution should ensure that all staff working on the project are equipped with the necessary skills, expertise and support to complete the research to a high standard and to adopt an SVH survivor-centred and trauma-informed approach.

The lead institution is expected to meet with the HEA ESVH Advisory Group, or a subgroup of this Advisory Group, to provide feedback on the methodological approach and participant recruitment strategy at the outset of the project, and during the project implementation as determined by the HEA. The lead institution should ensure all researchers adhere to all relevant safeguarding policies and requirements.

The study should consider and build on the findings of other relevant ESVH Implementation Plan actions (Action 5: [Further analysis of staff and student surveys at the demographic level](#) and Action 12: Undertake a study following the victim's journey from disclosure to outcome [which is underway]).

Study topics:

The following is a sample list of topics to explore:

- The context in which SVH disclosures were received.
- The effects and impact of receiving disclosures on their work / studies / research.
- Whether the person receiving disclosures felt equipped to support i.e. had received training, had the support of the institution.
- What did they do when they received the disclosure?

- Institutional supports and gaps – what structures, resources, or processes were helpful, and where improvements are needed.
- How they were able to support those who made disclosures. The impact of institutional policies and procedures on their experience of receiving a disclosure of SVH.
- Opportunities created by receiving disclosures – e.g. how disclosures led to improved awareness, enhanced training needs, stronger support networks, or policy/practice changes.
- Emotional and wellbeing impacts on those receiving disclosures – including both challenges (e.g. distress, secondary trauma) and positive aspects (e.g. sense of trust, capacity to make a difference).
- What supports (if any) or self-care did the person receiving the disclosure access?
- Barriers to progressing disclosures – e.g. fear of institutional inaction, lack of clarity in policies, workload pressures.
- Good practices and lessons learned – examples where disclosure handling worked well, and what can be scaled up across the sector.
- Intersectional considerations – how experiences differ by role (academic, administrative, student leader, etc.), demographic factors, or disclosure type (e.g. online harassment vs. physical assault).

Eligibility:

1. Eligible higher education institutions under this initiative are those listed in Appendix 1.
2. As per Appendix 1, eligible institutions can act as lead or partner in proposals. All proposals must nominate a lead institution for administrative and financial purposes.
3. Relevant non-HEI organisations may be included in proposals as partners.
4. HEIs from outside of Ireland may be included in proposals as advisory partners.
5. Staff intending to submit applications should contact the office of the Vice-President/Director of EDI in their institution. All applications must be signed by the Vice-President/Director of EDI in each participant institution. Undergraduate or postgraduate students may participate in projects under the supervision of the project lead.

Application and selection procedure:

Applications should be submitted using the application template by email to EDI@hea.ie by **12:00pm, 10 November 2025**.

The following information should be included:

- Details of previous experience of the applicant in undertaking similar projects.
- Details of the person(s) that will be assigned to the project, including their role and seniority, and their qualifications, skills and experience.
- Proposed approach and steps that will be followed to complete the study requirements set out above to a high standard, incorporating a trauma-informed approach.
- Detailed project timeframe, list of tasks, outputs and proposed outcomes.
- A breakdown of proposed cost, including justification.
- Any other information deemed relevant.

The HEA will establish an Assessment Panel to evaluate the applications received. The Assessment Panel will comprise members with expertise in the relevant areas. In establishing the Assessment Panel, due regard shall be given to gender balance.

The Assessment Panel will consider the extent to which the applications meet the criteria of the Call as outlined in this document. All applications will be assessed solely on the basis of the material provided to the HEA at the time of submission. The HEA's decision on the award of funding under this Call is final.

Assessment criteria:

Criterion	Marks	Minimum qualifying threshold
The experience and track-record in completing similar research projects.	200	100
Resources and skills to be applied to the project (e.g. quality / experience / seniority of the proposed project team or project lead).	150	75
Proposed approach to the research and how well the proposal responds to the description and requirements outlined in the research brief.	350	175
Trauma Informed Approach- how well the proposal will ensure that the approach is trauma informed including appropriate supervision and reflective practice of/by the researcher(s).	100	50
Justification of costs and value for money.	200	100
Total	1000	500

A minimum threshold will apply in respect of each of the assessment criteria. Only proposals which score 500 marks (50%) or above will be considered for funding. Meeting the minimum threshold is not a guarantee of funding.

Reporting and monitoring:

It is expected that a robust monitoring system will be developed and resourced, and that the project outcomes and expenditure will be appropriately tracked.

Institutions with successful proposals will be required to submit an interim report to the HEA on progress, expenditure and the outcomes a final reporting line with reporting timelines set out by the HEA. Institutions with successful proposals will be subject to the HEA's standard terms.

Projects must be completed within 18 months of HEIs receiving initial funding. Award holders may request extensions to this timeframe in exceptional circumstances. Requests for changes or extensions must be submitted to the HEA in advance, and these will be considered on a case-by- case basis.

Should an institution be successful for funding under this Call, institutions will be required, as per S38(2) of the HEAA 2022:

- a) to provide financial and other information to the HEA CEO;
- b) to use the funding in a cost effective and beneficial manner;
- c) to operate according to standards of good governance;
- d) to comply with the guidelines, codes and policies issued by the HEA under S143 of the HEAA 2022;
- e) to comply on a continuous basis with the funding framework;
- f) to comply with financial requirements;
- g) to comply with the HEAA 2022 and regulations made thereunder; and
- h) to comply with such other conditions as may be determined, with the approval of the HEA Board, by the HEA CEO.

The HEA reserves the right to terminate funding in circumstances such as, but not limited to, the following:

- a) if progress is unsatisfactory,
- b) if funds have not been used for the activities/research approved,
- c) if work has stopped on the research project,
- d) if reporting requirements are not adhered to,
- e) if the project team or project contravenes institutional and/or national policies, or
- f) if ethical approval is not granted where it is required.

Appendix 1

Higher education institutions that are eligible to apply as a **lead institution or partner institution** under this initiative are included below:

- Atlantic Technological University
- Dublin City University
- Dún Laoghaire Institute of Art, Design and Technology
- Dundalk Institute of Technology
- Mary Immaculate College
- Maynooth University
- Munster Technological University
- National College of Art and Design
- Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland, University of Medicine and Health Sciences
- South East Technological University
- Technological University Dublin
- Technological University of the Shannon: Midlands Midwest
- Trinity College Dublin
- University College Cork
- University College Dublin
- University of Galway
- University of Limerick

Higher education institutions and representative bodies that are eligible to apply as a **partner institution only** under this initiative are included below:

- Carlow College
- Dublin Institute of Advanced Studies
- National College of Ireland
- Irish Universities Association
- Technological Universities Association

Appendix 2

Eligible Costs:

- Costs may include buy-out costs for staff already employed in the institutions hosting the project. No further funding will be made available during the course of a project to cover increases in salary costs.
- Salary costs may be sought for staff recruited onto a project. The staff employment and/or buy-out costs should be in accordance with institutional norms.¹
- Costs may include fees, consumables, travel and maintenance grants/stipends for graduate students and post-doctoral salaries which facilitate participation in the project. As the projects are of a maximum of 18 months duration, applicants must document the confirmed source of funding beyond the project lifetime for graduate student fees and stipends/maintenance.
- Postdoctoral and Research Assistant salaries must begin no lower than at the first point on the Irish Universities' Association salary scale or an equivalent.
- Inter-institutional visiting researcher's costs may also be included once clearly justified.
- Costs may be sought for third parties or consultants whose skills are crucial to the completion of the project (i.e., a digital archivist, public engagement practitioner, etc.). The necessity of these skillsets for the delivery of the project must be demonstrated in the application and steps should be taken to capture and share learnings with the HEI project partners.
- Requests for costs for community participants should align with institutional norms.
- Costs for small equipment (e.g. laptops) may be included but justification must be provided illustrating that the equipment is absolutely necessary to carry out the project and that such a facility is not available through other means to the project. All costs for equipment must clearly pertain to the proposal submitted to the call. Costs for equipment that are not fundamental to an approved project will not be permitted.
- Modest institutional overheads may be included up to a maximum of 25% of pay costs (full-time personnel or full-time equivalency basis). Where a staff member

¹ HEIs should take into account the findings and recommendations of the *Second Review of Gender Equality* in relation to precarity.

is not working full-time on the project, overheads may be calculated on a pro rata basis. Research student stipends and equipment should not be included as pay for the purpose of overhead calculation. Institutions may submit a flat rate for overheads at the time of application, provided this does not exceed 25% of pay costs requested from the HEA and is within the maximum overall funding request (€100,000).

- Other costs required must be specifically identified and justified, e.g., fieldwork, data collection, archives, open access publication, access to national infrastructures, etc.
- Costs to fund estates, room rental, or office space within or outside of an institution are not allowable expenses.
- Costs cannot be sought for seed funding to support further funding calls or sub-projects.
- No additional funding over and above agreed allocations to successful projects will be made available by the HEA.